

From: *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28 (1985), 612-13.

## **Tips For An Academic Job Talk**

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### Before the Talk

1. Ask about the format of the talk so that you will know how much time you will have.
2. If possible, schedule the talk early in the visit. This will make the individual meeting more productive.
3. Practice your talk, even if it is in front of just a few friends. This will help you be realistic about the timing, get the phrasing down, and learn what parts are unclear.
4. Try to get a half-hour to yourself just before the talk to review your notes.

### During the Talk

5. Start by giving the title.
6. Next, ask people to hold their questions until the end (except for brief questions of clarification). Otherwise you are likely to get interrupted and never finish the talk. If you are interrupted, and you can't give an answer in a single phrase, ask the person to save that question until the end.
7. Be sure to explain near the beginning why a nonspecialist might be interested in your work.
8. Be realistic about the time it will take to give your talk. Be ruthless with yourself in planning what you will be able to say, and what you'll have to leave out. If you are running short of time during the talk, it is better to cut a pre-planned optional section in the middle than to be prevented from giving the conclusion.
9. Near the end, be sure to explain why your substantive conclusions are of importance beyond the immediate topic of the work.
10. A good talk, like a good musical, has a theme that people can whistle to themselves on the way out.

11. For most people, it is better to speak from a detailed outline than from a script. If you do read your talk, be sure that you do not read too fast, that you don't use a monotone, and that you maintain eye contact.
12. Use a blackboard to help focus attention and to have a common reference point with the audience. Use handouts if the material is too detailed to put on the blackboard. Be sure the handouts are not too complex and are well labeled. Have plenty of copies of the handouts with the pages stapled together.

### After the Talk

13. The hardest task is to appreciate what a questioner is getting at. Ask for clarification if you are not sure, for example, by restating the question in your own words and asking if that is what was meant.
14. It is not a crime to pause before you reply. It might even make you look thoughtful.
15. It is not a crime to take notes on the remarks from the audience, especially on an interesting point that you hadn't thought of. It might even make you look like you care.
16. It is not a crime to say "I don't know" or "my data aren't decisive about that but I'll be glad to speculate."
17. If a few people are dominating the questioning (which often happens), say "I'd like to call on the person in the back of the room now who hasn't had a chance to ask a question yet."